

Dear FCC,

My name is Steven Cheshko and I am writing in response to your proposed rule changes.

The reason:

Christian radio such as Air1, KLove, or the various parts of EWTN is important to the lives of many people including myself. Yes, it is about faith, but it is more than that as well. For many people, it is about hope and finding God's love in a world that often seems so dark and heartless. For example, both my good friend and I have had serious bouts of depression. And music is one of those things that really touches a person based on where you are. When your down and the only music available is talking about suicide or people cheating on each other or whatever, you only seek lower. On the other hand, if there are programs and messages of hope and love, it can really help to save you (even literally) as it did for both of us.

These stations are continuously receiving stories of people that have overcome suicide attempts, substance abuse, family tragedies, pornography, and the other challenges of life because of what they hear on the radio. Sometimes it is Divine Providence that puts the right thing on the air at right time for the right person like the man that was about purposely crash his car to end his when he turned on the radio to calm his daughters in the backseat only to hear a song about choosing hope and God over suicide. But for many more it is just a positive force to give strength in a tough world. In fact, both Air1 and KLove have "positive" in their slogan.

The comments:

Christian radio, as well as many other specific-interest stations, is often very small compared to main-stream networks. Therefore, they are more heavily impacted by FCC changes. For example, requiring a staffer to be present at all times might not seem extreme, but a small station that is basically just receiving satellite feed, this can be tens of many thousands of dollars in extra monthly expenses. Another example would be the priority given to Low Power FM Stations. The money required to update the technology in smaller/more remote areas could force them off the air. These viewer supported stations are struggling to stay financed as it is because people are less charitable in this economy. Every expense, no matter how small, makes a difference. This holds true for salaries, technology, and even legal fees to handle increased paperwork.

These stations also face challenges with the changes in the way they are reviewed and accessed. For example, the community advisory board sounds like a good idea to see how a station is doing. However, when the station focuses on a certain message such as the Gospel, or any other message, an average group of people representing the community is not going to be able to accurately judge how well a station is reaching its intended audience. For instance, if there were an environmental talk-show station, I would have difficulty knowing if its message was worth anything; the board members should be environmentalists. Religious stations are also in special danger because there are groups that harbor animosity towards us. Having an atheist on the board would be like having a Klan member making decisions about BET.

Requiring “public access” opportunities would also undermine special-interest stations. While it makes some sense to get local airtime on large cable companies, this is an entirely different situation. These stations are based on some message. To force the availability of radical viewpoints would not really open dialogue but would ruin the credibility of the station because its overall message would be weakened. For example, having pro-choice speakers on Christian Radio would probably not win over many people, but it would cause other people that are listening to doubt whether the station is really faithful to the Gospel.

### The Conclusion:

If you want to know the true effect a public station is having on its listeners, ask those listeners. Listener supported stations come with this measurement by default. If the stations are not reaching people and are not spreading the message they claim, those people aren’t going to support them. They either do their job well or die for lack of funding. It is a delicate but honest balance that is threatened every time outside control is exerted. It is a system that is self-contained and does not need extensive monitoring by the FCC.

I realize that it must be difficult to make rules for something as diverse as the radio media. But please try to keep these smaller but important outlets in mind when you do. They aren’t hurting anyone; they are just trying to spread their message to their listeners. Religious radio gives hope, love, faith, joy, peace, and God to people that need it in their days (just check out their websites and listen to the stories). What greater public service could you provide?

Thank you for taking the time to read this and consider what one listener thinks.

God's Peace  
Steven Cheshko